



CODE-SWITCHING IN ENGLISH CLASS: A STRATEGY IN BOOSTING LEARNERS' CONFIDENCE AND ENGAGEMENT

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ABSTRACT

The issue of using the vernacular inside an English class has been a topic of great controversy; hence, this study was conducted to identify the positive effects of code-switching in an English class. Specifically, this aims to determine how this controversial issue in the field of language teaching can boost the learners' confidence and engagement during class discussions. The data obtained revealed that the use of CS inside an English class bears positive effects on the level of confidence and engagement of the learners. The pedagogical implications of the study can be used and be considered by language teachers to further improve second language acquisition among the learners. Based on the learners' own experiences and responses, which served as the data used in this study, the use of code-switching has a positive effect on increasing and boosting their confidence and engagement during English classes; consequently, the teacher also plays a great part in boosting the learners' motivation to participate and engage themselves in discussions. Hence, during the teaching-learning process, teachers should make their best to optimize learners' emotional factors, lower their affective filters that is, high motivation, low anxiety and this will be possible with the use of code-switching.

Keywords: *anxiety, code-switching, communication, confidence, engagement, English class, Filipino learners, Mother Tongue – Based Multilingual Education (MTB – MLE)*

I. INTRODUCTION

Communication is essential in human life. Without it, people cannot express their thoughts, insights, opinions and feelings, (Bangayan- Manera, 2019) Even a newborn baby communicates with the world with his first cry and gasp of air and, in communicating, the language used is a vital component. Hence, language is many things, but it is never easy.

English has always been the medium of instruction of the content subjects taught in Philippines' educational system, along with Filipino. It is the second language of Filipinos most especially those whose first language is Filipino (the modernized register of Tagalog). English-medium education began in the Philippines in 1901 after the arrival of some 540 US teachers known in the history of the Philippine education as the Thomasites. It was made the language of



education and as its use extended it became indigenized through the inclusion of vocabulary from local languages, the adaptation of English words to local needs, and modifications in pronunciation and grammar (McArthur, 2002). Since then, content subjects like Mathematics and Science are taught using the English language, but not until the passing of Republic Act 10523, otherwise known as the “Enhanced Basic Education Act of 2013” in which Mother Tongue – Based Multilingual Education (MTB – MLE) was implemented among all public and private schools in the country. MTB – MLE is education, formal or non – formal, in which learner’s mother tongue and additional languages are used in the classroom. Learners begin their education in the language they understand best – their mother tongue – and develop a strong foundation in their mother tongue before adding additional languages. On the contrary, MTB – MLE encompasses only up to primary school or grade 3 in the Philippine setting. Secondary schools do not use mother tongue in teaching content subjects for the assumption that learners are already familiar and equipped with the basics of the second language (L2). Learners have been studying content subjects like that of Mathematics and Science using their second language and this has always been a problem to the teachers of these subject areas. Learners do not have enough knowledge and understanding to comprehend simple sentences in English much more, understanding the concepts in their respective subject areas.

In addition, code –switching is also shown to be beneficial in creating a low anxiety atmosphere in the classroom. As opposed to an “English Only” policy as the language of instruction, forcing students to speak English, or any language that is not their first language, before they are ready to is extremely anxiety-provoking, most especially when they are asked to do this in front of a class. Language of instruction has been the topic of greatest controversy in the education of English Language Learners, and by far the most volatile issue has been the use of English learners’ primary language for instruction: Should English learners be taught skills in English which is just their second language (ESL) from the onset of their schooling, or should they be taught academic skills using their home language or their mother tongue? (Martin, 2010 cited by Domingo, 2016). With this question left unanswered, teachers oftentimes resort to code-switching inside the classroom. Code-switching on the other hand is the mixing of two or more language varieties within a single utterance or conversation (Lesada, 2017). The Philippines, being



a nation with a wide diversity of language and culture, such linguistic phenomenon commonly happen. Teachers inside the classroom do not have any other choice but to utilize the use of the learners' mother tongue in teaching their subjects for better and easier understanding. Hence, it gave birth to the widely used term which is "Taglish" or the Tagalog-English code-switching. According to Lesada (2017), Taglish has been described as "a very widespread predominantly spoken "mixed" language variety whose phonology, morphology, syntax and semantics have been greatly influenced by English and Tagalog" (Tangco & Ricardo 2002, 391). Instead of teaching the key concepts, formulas and information to be taught using the English language, teachers use Taglish so that there will be understanding and interaction between him/her and the learners.

Motivation is the state of being motivated, or the need or the purpose. In connection with that, it is the definite purpose for doing a particular activity or, in short, the endless effort in order to achieve the goal. Inside an English classroom, motivation plays a great role in the process of learning and acquiring the language. It determines the level of participation and engagement of each of the learners, it will also identify how motivated the students are in order to learn a certain topic most especially the complex ones. This involves intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. In the realm of English language teaching, researchers have different classifications of motivation. Some learners have very poor performance in the second language because they have little or not enough motivation for it. The most commonly reason is that they are afraid to commit mistakes. It is as if committing a mistake in grammar is a big sin and also they are afraid to be laughed at by their classmates. This is evident in Krashen's Affective Filter Hypothesis (1989), according to him, the lower the filter, the more it is possible for the learner to acquire the language and the higher the filter, the less it is possible for them to understand a particular lesson, much more, learn the language. These filters include some of the things teachers need to consider inside a classroom like the environment, the motivation of the students and of course, the teachers' factor. The concept of the affective filter was proposed by Dulay and Burt (1977), and is consistent with the theoretical work. Researchers over the last decades have confirmed that a variety of affective variables relate to success in second language acquisition (reviewed in Krashen, 1981).

Moreover, studies supported the claim that the language used inside the classroom should not be the issue but rather the purpose of education should be the one given focus on. The standard of quality and relevant education should always be considered all the time and not the language



used by the teacher in teaching the subject matter. With this in mind, teachers were advised to use contextualization in delivering their lessons and covering all the required competencies that encompasses the curriculum, as a matter of fact, it has been widely used by teachers most especially when k to 12 curriculum came to light. According to Torres (2015), contextualization refers to the educational process of relating the curriculum to a particular setting, situation or area of application to make the competencies relevant, meaningful and useful to the learners. In other words, the language these content subject teachers are using in delivering their lessons and interacting with the learners is not what matters but the context and the content of their lesson.

Research Objectives

The study is an attempt to identify the effect of using code – switching in classroom discussions in building the confidence and engagement of select grade 7 students of MCHS – Santisima Trinidad.

Specifically, the objective of the study is to assess the viability of code – switching in boosting the learners' confidence and engagement.

II. METHODOLOGY

A research design includes the structure and strategies for conducting the study (Kerlinger, 2008). One has to determine the research design of the study being conducted for the researcher to have a blueprint of what to do on the process of finishing the research. The present study will use qualitative method in research. Creswell (2008) said that qualitative is used when the researchers are collecting data in the field where the participants experience the issue or problem under study. It is a means for exploring and understanding the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem. The process of this research involves emerging questions and procedures, data typically collected in the participant's setting, data analysis inductively building from particulars to themes and the researcher making interpretations of the gathered data or information. In qualitative research, the researcher will have to collect data through examining documents, observing behavior, or interviewing the participants of the study. The researcher may use a protocol – an instrument for collecting data - but the researcher will be the one who will actually gather the information. Qualitative researchers also gather multiple forms of data, such as interviews, observations, and documents, rather than solely relying on a single data source. As for



the present study, the researcher will test the use of code-switching in her classroom discussions and the responses of the learners will determine if code-switching is an effective strategy in boosting their confidence and engagement based on their feedback and responses.

Respondents and Sampling Methods

Sampling in qualitative research is less tedious than that of quantitative research. Merriam – Webster Dictionary defines sampling “as the act, process or technique of selecting a representative part of a population for the purpose of determining parameters or characteristics of the whole population”. However, this definition differs in qualitative research; sampling in qualitative research is defined as the selection of specific data sources from which data are collected to address the research objectives (Gentles et. al, 2015). The present study will use purposeful sampling otherwise known as the purposive and selective sampling. This is a technique researcher use in recruiting participants who can provide in-depth and detailed information about the phenomenon under investigation.

Proposed Strategy

Learners’ participation and engagement during English classes are low compared with the level of their participation with other subjects. One of the key factors that cause this is the language used during the discussion. Hence, the researcher comes up with a strategy which will enable the learners to strengthen their confidence and their interaction with their classmates and teacher at the same time. Code-switching has been an emerging issue in the field of language educators; whether it will be allowed inside a language class or not? On the contrary, studies supported the claim that the language used inside the classroom should not be the issue but rather the purpose of education should be the one given focus on.

Data Collection Procedure

The data collection in this study will be through observation and interview. This will set boundary for the study and the researcher will establish the protocol for recording information. The researcher will have first-hand experience with the respondents since the researcher herself, will be the one implementing the proposed strategy. Recording of the responses during the



interview is upon the discretion of the respondents' parents since the respondents involved in the study are minors. Unusual aspects can be noticed by the researcher during the observation and private information may be observed that the researcher cannot report.

Ethical Considerations

The permission from the School Principal was sought before carrying out this study. Since the respondents for this study are all under the age of eighteen, permission to conduct the study at the school was crucial most especially giving informed consent for their parents. Other ethical research practices will be considered and implemented. The study will be done in accordance with ethical requirements of scientific practices and of the law. Participant will be admitted into the study through their own voluntary informed consent (Burns & Grove, 2007). The decision of the learners and the parents who do not want to be part of the study will also be respected. The school timetable will be respected as well, and all the data took place outside learning hours so as not to disadvantage those learners participating in the study.

The participants will be assured of their privacy, confidentiality, and anonymity. In this regard, the identity of participants will not be revealed in any way, and access the raw data will be limited to the researcher. The participants will receive uniform and fair treatment during the study to avoid discomfort and harm.

Data Analysis

The data gathered were encoded and collated personally by the researcher. The interview questions were in English but the respondents were allowed to answer in both English and Filipino for spontaneity and for them to feel comfortable. The answers were translated in English by the researcher and were checked and verified by a language expert.

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This study is intended to identify how the use of code – switching inside the classroom boosts the learners' confidence and engagement by observing and interviewing the students after a week of using both English and Filipino inside an English class. The questions used in the interview used both English and Filipino and the respondents were allowed to answer in Filipino,

then, their answers were transcribed and analyzed. Texts were codified, summarized and developed to address the objective of the study.

Code-Switching as a Means in Improving the Learners Level of Engagement and Confidence.

Language learning involves both the cognitive and the affective aspect of a learner. In addition to some of the objective factors, the affective factor also plays an active role in a learner's process of learning the second language; it is like a filter that filtrates all the input the learner is getting from the environment. People with high affective filter will lower their intake whereas people with low affective filter allow more input into their language acquisition device. In the interview proper of this study, the researcher needed to translate and explain the questions in Filipino so that the respondents will easily understand and respond spontaneously. Below are the transcribed responses of some of the respondents:

1. What can you say about your English class?

R1: *"Madalas po nakakakaba .. kasi hindi ko sigurado kung matatawag ba ako ni Ma'am o hindi"..* Most of the time, I feel nervous because I'm not sure if I will be called (by Ma'am) or not.

R2: *"Okay naman po."* It's okay.

R3: *"Tahimik lang po ako kapag English kasi kapag nag-ingay po ako baka tawagin ako ni Ma'am."* I'm being quiet because if I will be noisy I might be called (by the teacher).

R4: *"Natatakot po ako kasi English."* I'm afraid because it is in English.

R5: *"Nakakaenjoy po kasi may mga times na nagjojoke si Ma'am kaya po hindi po boring."* It's enjoyable because there are times that my teacher throws a joke, making the class not boring.

2. Do you feel anxious during English class?

R1: *"Ano po yung anxious?"* What is anxious?

(after explaining the word anxious)

"Ahh .. parang kinakabahan po? Medyo po .. lalo kapag nagstraight English si Ma'am." Ahh .. somehow like nervous? Slightly .. most especially when the teacher speaks in straight English.

(Why are you becoming nervous when your teacher speaks straight English?)



“Hahahaha .. hindi ko po naiintindihan minsan. Mahirap po kasi, kasi parang mabilis ‘tas wala po akong maintindihan kapag mabilis na.” “(laughs) ... sometimes, I don’t understand it. It’s difficult, because it seems fast and I can’t comprehend it if it becomes fast.

R2: *“Anxious po ba yung nakakakaba?”* Is anxious also feeling nervous?

(yes.)

“Opo. Madalas po yun .. “ yes. And it’s often.

R3: *“Minsan lang po .. kapag lang nagrerecitation tapos walang nagtataas ng kamay, tatawag nap o si Ma’am ‘nun.”* Seldom .. when there’s recitation and no one is raising their hands, Ma’am will call for someone (to answer her question)

R4: *“Konti lang po .. hindi rin naman po ako nagrerecite kasi English.”* A little bit .. I’m not reciting because it’s English after all.

R5: *“Naku! Minsan po .. kasi bigla nalang tumatawag si Ma’am ng sasagot..”* Oh my! Oftentimes, because Ma’am will just call someone to answer.

3. Do you prefer using both English and Filipino in your English classes? Why or why not?

R1: *“Yes po! Mas okay po sakin yung ganun .. kasi kahit papaano, may maiintindihan po ako saka yung mga kaklase ko ..”* Definitely! It’s much better for me because we will be able (my classmates and I) understand something.

R2: *“Yung English-Tagalog po sa klase? Opo. Mas maganda po yun kasi mas makakaintindi po kami.”* Using English-Tagalog in class? Yes (Ma’am). It is much better because we would understand more.

R3: *“Sa’kin po .. opo ..kasi ano ..mas okay sya. Mas maintindihan naming yung mga lesson ni Ma’am saka po hindi kami kakabahan masyado kapag tatawagin kami ..yun po kasi ang nakakamatay sa kaba ..”* For me, yes. (because) it is much better .. we could easily understand the lessons (that) taught by Ma’am and it will make us feel less nervous whenever we will be called ..that’s the terrifying part.

R4: *“Opo. Ano ..ano kasi, mas okay yun kaysa straight English po syempre ..at .. at saka mas mabilis naming maiintindihan yung lesson.”* Yes Ma’am. Because .. it’s better than straight English (of course). And .. we can easily understand the lesson.



R5: *“Ano Ma’am .. kung ako po yung pipili ..mas maganda po kung pwede yung Tagalog sa klase .. mahirap po kasing magconstruct kapag sasagot tapos nakakakaba po kasi baka magkamali ..”* (Ma’am) ..if I were to choose, it would be better if Tagalog (Filipino) will be used in(side) and English class ..it’s hard to construct (sentences) whenever (we’re) answering ..then it’s (quite) nerve-wracking to commit mistake (while answering).

4. Is using both English and Filipino help you in being confident and more participative in class?

R1: *“Yes Ma’am .. nakakawala po kasi ng kaba kapag hindi straight yung English .. ano po .. kunyari .. si Ma’am ay nagtatagalog din sa pag-eexplain .. mga ganun po.”* Yes Ma’am .. it’s less terrifying when (the instructions) are not in straight English .. for example, Ma’am is also speaking in Tagalog when explaining ..

R2: *“Oo naman po! Madalas kasi alam ko yung sagot pero hindi ako nagrerecite kasi natatakot akong magkamali ..”* Definitely! Most of the time (during class) I know the answer yet I’m not reciting because I’m afraid to commit mistakes.

R3: *“Ano Ma’am .. mas kaya kasi naming sumagot kapag hindi straight English ..madalas po eh naiintindihan naman naming ng mga classmates ko yung tanong pero hindi kami makasagot kasi dapat English ..eh kung ganun po palagi na pwede magTagalog, nagrerecite nap o siguro kami ng mas madalas.”* We could answer more if it’s not (instructions) in straight English. Most of the time we understand the questions but we can’t answer because we should answer in English .. if that will be the case that we can participate in tagalog, we can recite more often.

R4: *“Yung kaba po kasi na dapat English ang sagot .. yun po ang nakakatakot kapag English ..madalas nga yung mga kaklase ko, alam naman nila yung sagot pero di sila nagtataas ng kamay kasi ipapaexplain pa sa English.”* The thought that the answer should be in English is the nerve-wracking part (of the English class). Most of the time, my classmates know the answer but they are not raising their hands because they will be asked to explain it in English.

R5: *“Opo Ma’am. Laking ginhawa po nun sa puso .. hahahaha kasi kahit papaano, makakasagot sagot na kaming magkakaklase.”* Yes Ma’am. It’s a burden (for us) .. (laughs) we can answer at least (during class)

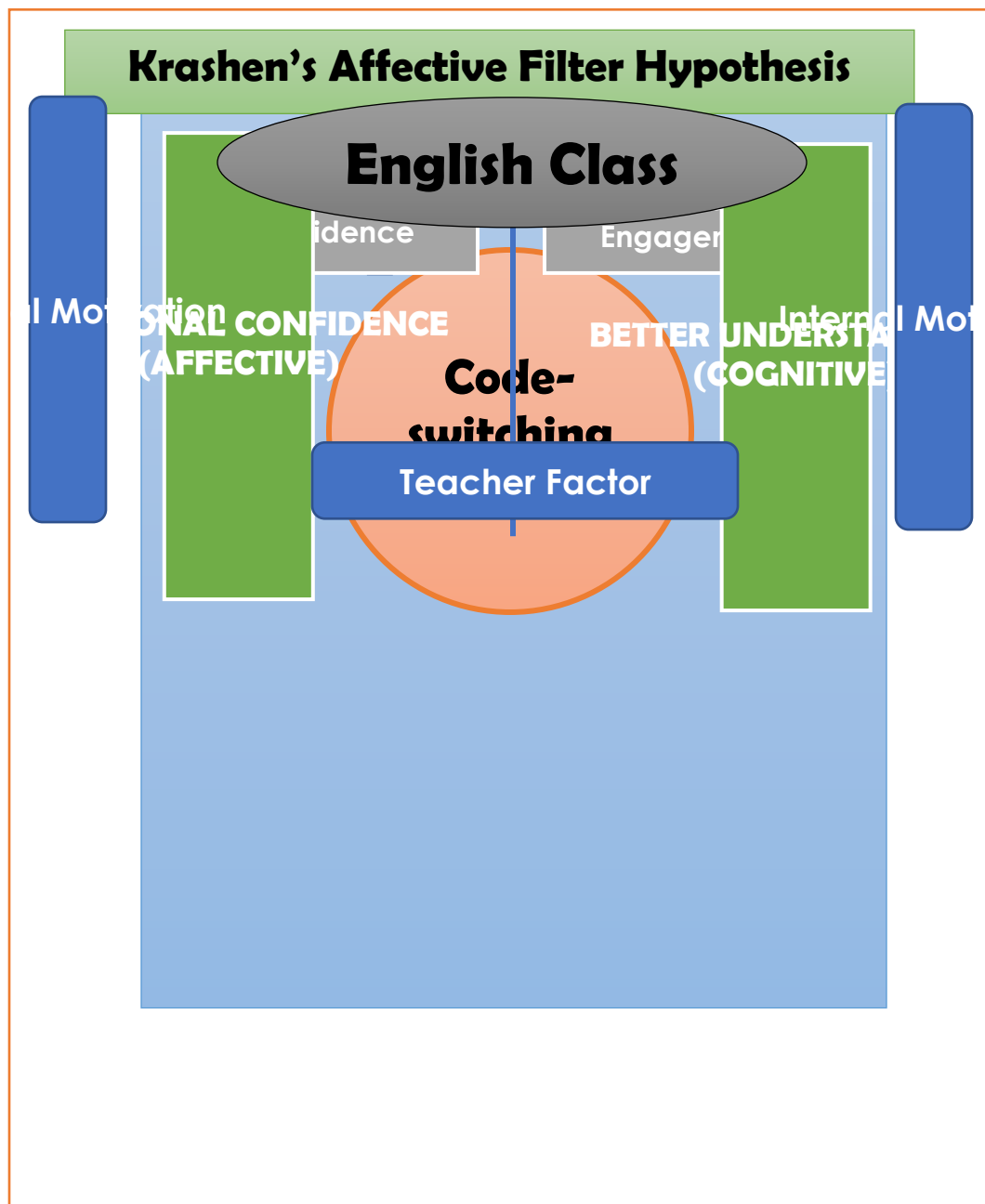
Du (2009) cited Gardner and MacIntyre (1993) regarding their views about language anxiety. They view it as the apprehension experienced when a situation requires the use of a second language with which the individual is not fully proficient. There are correlations between anxiety and performance and the learning of the second language has different factors. Based on the responses of the learners, they are all in favor of using code-switching inside an English class. The interview happened spontaneously and the learners were interviewed one at a time. Hence, their answers are not affected or swayed by other learners' answers. It was also evident that they understand the lessons more when the teacher allows them to answer and explain in both English and Filipino. Nevertheless, Krashen's affective filter is evident in the results of the present study. Self-confidence is a very vital part of learning a language and the cultivation of the confidence of the learners depends on the learners themselves and the teacher's help as well. In this case, the teacher can as much as possible use code-switching whenever discussing concepts and asking questions.

IV. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the results and findings of the study, the following conclusions were revealed: code-switching has a positive effect on increasing and boosting learner's confidence and engagement during English classes and the teacher also plays a great part in boosting the learners' motivation to participate and engage themselves in discussions. Apparently, it also appears that the more they are allowed to speak and use the vernacular, the bigger the tendency that they will interact with their classmates most especially when there are group activities.

Taken together, it is imperative to stress that teachers play the most important role in the use of the vernacular. In a recent study, Thompson and Harry (2014) observed that a majority of teachers opted for using the first language substantially in spite of their training and policies stated clearly sanctioning exclusive target language use.

Therefore, teachers should arouse students' motivations, build up their self-esteem and lower their anxiety because of the fact that high motivation, low anxiety and self-confidence and good self-image are the main features of low affective filter, together with the use of code-switching, it will be helpful to build low affective filter for the learners to promote and aim for better understanding.



Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations are offered:

1. The Department of Education should consider the use of the vernacular in teaching English in public schools elaborating its objectives and targeted goals. It does not necessary mean



that English will be taught in Tagalog but rather, learners will be allowed to answer using it. This will help the learners become more active and participative during English classes.

2. Learners should be encouraged to participate more by making them realize that it's not a sin to commit mistakes. They should be allowed to speak in their first language if that is what it takes for them to speak their minds.
3. The use of code-switching in other content subjects other than English should also be taken in consideration; for it could help in improving better understanding of the concepts and other complex processes in subjects like Mathematics and Science.
4. With this study and its findings, further research is needed to shed more light regarding the use of code-switching inside the classroom, though it brings positive effects on boosting the learners' confidence and engagement, it would be better if further research will be conducted on the effect of CS on the understanding and performance of the learners.



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